

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## CAPTIVE-BRED WATERFOWL MARKING RULES PROPOSED

Migratory bird breeders and hobbyists may be afforded a choice of four methods of marking captive bred ducks, geese, swans, and brant instead of the single method of toe-clipping presently required by Federal law, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

"This proposed change in Federal regulations recently published in the Federal Register could accommodate the desires of bird breeders and hobbyists and also allow effective administration of Federal laws," Greenwalt said.

Public comment is invited on these proposals. All comments received through December 17, 1974, will become a part of the record and be considered before final regulations are promulgated. Comments and requests for copies of the proposal should be addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Law Enforcement Division, Washington, D.C. 20240.

In 1918 with the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the hunting of migratory waterfowl for commercial sale was ended. At the same time, however, Congress realized that domesticated flocks of waterfowl already in the possession of private individuals could make an important contribution to the Nation's food resources. Therefore provision was made in the Federal law for the selling of captive-reared migratory game birds under proper regulations. The marking requirements are part of the regulations which are necessary to insure that wild birds do not enter commercial markets.

Since that time, the field of captive breeding has expanded to include private shooting preserves as well as hobbyists who raise captive-bred waterfowl for show and aesthetic purposes. The hobbyists have long complained that the Federal requirements for toe-clipping conflicts with the aesthetics of showing birds and allegedly pose health hazards to the birds.

After considering the various interests in captive-bred waterfowl, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing four methods of marking these birds. They are:

(1) Removal of the hind toe of the right foot.

(2) Pinioning of a wing, which is removal of the metacarpal bones of one wing or a portion of the metacarpal bones, to render the bird permanently incapable of flight.

(over)

(3) Banding of one leg (metatarsus) with a seamless metal band.

(4) Tattooing on the web of one foot.

The choice of which method or methods to use will be up to individual owners.

The present legal method, removal of the right hind toe, is economically desirable to those who must identify large numbers of birds such as food suppliers.

Pinioning is a method accepted by aviculturists and hobbyists who seek to restrict the movement of birds.

Banding is the most aesthetic way of marking, but since it requires placing the band at precisely the right stage of development in the bird's life (at a few days after hatching), it is suitable only for those who deal with a limited number of birds such as hobbyists.

Tattooing requires special equipment unless the person utilizing the technique is knowledgeable and skilled in the tattooing art. Therefore it, too, is suitable only for those who handle a limited number of birds.

Federal law still prohibits the taking of migratory birds or their eggs from the wild with the intent of selling or offering them for sale. A permit system encompassing all migratory waterfowl in captivity was initiated shortly after the passage of the 1918 Act and has evolved over the years. By the 1950's the introduction of flight-capable domestic mallards and black ducks for tower shooting which involves releasing ducks into the wild resulting in the intermingling of migrating wild ducks with captive-bred stocks and the taking of wild birds in excess of bag limits. Permit procedures were changed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1956 to regulate the taking of migratory waterfowl on shooting preserves and to require tagging or other means to identify captive stock. After a significant court decision in 1961 involving the shooting of domesticated ducks, regulations were promulgated which authorize the shooting of captive-reared and properly marked mallard ducks on shooting preserves licensed by the individual States.

By the 1960's the public interest in aviculture prompted another change in the permit system whereby aviculturists, under permit, could acquire, propagate, and exchange captive-bred waterfowl among themselves and be exempt from the toe-clipping requirement. The recently proposed regulations would do away with this exemption and require aviculturists to utilize at least one of the four methods of marking waterfowl.

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